Count Lecter

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Count Lecter

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Summary

A Hannibal retelling of Bram Stoker's Dracula. Part of a larger series in which classic works of Gothic literature are recast with Hannibal characters.

Notes

Hannibal Lecter: Count Dracula
Will Graham: Jonathon Harker/Renfield
Bedelia Du Maurier: Professor Van Helsing
Alana Bloom: Mina Murray
Frederick Chilton: Dr. John Seward
Randall Tier: The wolf

Chapter 1

Will Graham shivered in the corner of his cell in the insane asylum. His body seemed to be going through intense withdrawal. He could feel him near him, and it was driving him near the brink of delirium. The voice in his head was calling out to him in the soft, guttural murmurs of Hannbal Lecter.

Why have you forsaken my love, pet?

Will whimpered and pressed his face against his raised knees.

“I’m sorry, Master,” he cried. The words echoed off of the walls of the cell.

Do you not crave my touch?

Will swallowed and threw his head back. He felt as though the hands were upon him as he spoke, caressing his throat, massaging his sore shoulders.

“Yes, Master, I want to return to you. Please… take me back.”

You must come to me.

Will stood up and walked to the window covered in bars. He pushed his face against them and stared out at the moon. He couldn’t bear what he was feeling.

Come to me, Will, and feel my arms around you once more. Feel the sting of my bite at your neck, my body pressed against yours.

He felt a thrall’s desperation. The thought of Count Lecter wrapping him in his embrace, his teeth burying into him, the blood rushing from him, drove him to madness. He pushed his hands down his trousers and began to fondle himself.

“Please help me, Master. I am trapped.”

The voice was gone but the intense desire remained.

“Master?” he begged, pushing up against the wall and stroking his cock. He rubbed his head against the bars, tears filling his eyes. “Master, please.”

He sobbed and slouched to the floor, rocking back and forth. He tried to think back to a time when his mind and body were at peace. It seemed ages ago. The Count’s grasp on him seemed to stretch back and erase anything that came before it. But there had been peace for him once. He had loved Alana Bloom once.

That was before he had ventured to Castle Lecter, on what was supposed to be a business trip. He had tried to keep in touch with his fiancée, but he had no comprehension of how far removed he was from her.

My dearest Alana,

This journey has been a very strange one indeed. The nearer I come to my destination, the more the local villagers insist that I should turn back. The area is rife with superstition. While I stayed at the inn, the landlady asked me where I was going. When I informed her of my impending visit to Castle Lecter, her face turned positively ashen and she rushed away only to return with a rosary which she hung around my neck. “To ward off the evil eye” she said. I politely accepted, but the rosary was stowed in my luggage as soon as I was on my way again. I must say that I feared too much acknowledgment of baseless anxiety on my part would only heighten my apprehension.

I cannot judge these local villagers for their wariness toward the supernatural. The country, while incomparable in its beauty, is dark and carries with it an ominous weight. The trees cast their shadows upon deep green moss and strange stones. As I travelled by carriage, I could have sworn I saw lights flickering from deep within the woods but they vanished in my periphery as soon as I looked in their direction. I admit that I felt a strange sense of the uncanny as I approached the Count’s castle.

The Count himself, Hannibal Lecter, is the most charming and sophisticated gentleman I have ever come across. He told me how glad he was to speak with an Englishman, for it would strengthen his fluency when he moves to our shores. The Castle Carfax, which I am securing for him, is a most lavish abode. However, it is nothing compared to the vast estate of Castle Lecter. The dinner I ate with him was superb, containing more courses than I could ever consume. I filled myself happily, but Count Lecter must have a poor appetite for he only sipped his wine and poked delicately at the beautiful dishes until they were carried away by his manservant, Randall.

Despite the food, my gracious host, and the impeccable accoutrements of my bedroom, I already long for the comforts of home, and you most of all. I miss you dreadfully and cannot wait to be in your arms once more.

With deepest love,

Will Graham

“Please,” Count Lecter spoke, smelling the wine in his glass, “tell me how your travels fared?”

Randall lifted away an empty place and replaced it with yet another course: a beautifully roasted turtle dove with the tail-feathers left intact and un-singed, nestled amongst its own eggs which had been soft-boiled, caps removed, and seasoned with paprika.

“Magnificent,” Will whispered.

“I am glad to hear that,” Lecter replied.

Will was quite surprised that he could hear him from his end of the grand table.

“Oh,” Will chuckled, nodding his head as he began to slice a moist piece from the bird. “I was referring to the dish, but in fact, my trip has been quite pleasant. Thank you.”

Lecter smiled and sipped his wine.

“And the locals?” he asked. “How have they treated you?”

“Very well.”

Will took a bite and couldn’t resist rolling his eyes upward.

“I must compliment your chef, Count Lecter,” he urged. “This is exquisite.”

“I prepare the food myself, Mr. Graham,” the Count replied. “And I thank you.”

Will looked at him in surprise. He had noticed there were no apparent servants in the castle at all, aside from Randall.

“The locals are an odd breed, I must say,” Will continued, “Quite taken with superstition.”

“Superstition?” Lecter asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Many of them insisted that these woods were cursed and that some evil spirit resides amidst your estate. I hope you don’t take any offense at me relating this to you.”

Lecter swirled the wine in his glass, admiring the way it coated the interior.

“One woman insisted I wear a rosary. As I’m not particularly religious, I found it a bit awkward.”

Count Lecter turned his gaze upon him, a look of interest in his eyes. Will had found him exceedingly handsome upon his arrival; a tall, gentile frame and striking facial features of heavily-lidded eyes, Roman nose, and a persistent pout on his lips. Now, as his host laid eyes directly upon him in this fashion, he felt a nervous quiver in his belly.

“Do you not believe in God?” Lecter asked.

Will feared he had offended his host.

“I merely meant that I don’t adhere to any certain dogma,” he clarified.

Hannibal sniffed and grinned at his guest, who was simultaneously relieved to see a friendly expression, and unnerved by the tenaciousness of his gaze.

“I’ve not been bothered by any considerations of deity, other than to recognize how my own modest actions pale beside those of God,” Lecter responded, “Who is beyond measure in wanton malice, and matchless in His irony.”

Will raised his glass.

“Would that we could hold him accountable,” he said.

“Ah,” Lecter pointed out, “But then he would not be God, who is accountable to no one.”

He raised his glass in Will’s direction despite the sentiment, and they both drank.

Dear Alana,

The arrangements with Count Hannibal Lecter have gone very smoothly, and I expect I will be returning to you before the month is over. The castle is enormously large, with many rooms that I have only begun to explore. I feel a bit intrusive when I wander around the estate on my own, but my curiosity, as always, gets the better of me.

There is something so eerie about this place. As I have mentioned, the castle is resplendent and I am well-cared for, but I feel so often uneasy in my own bedchamber. At night I hear strange noises that must be the wind howling through the gables, but sound very much like wicked laughter and human wails. I woke in the middle of the night to look out my window. I must have been half asleep, for I thought I saw a man scaling the walls of the castle as quickly as a lizard.

I wish I had packed a small mirror to shave by. There isn’t one in my room. In fact, the more I’ve thought about it while exploring the other rooms, the more I’ve realized that there aren’t any mirrors in Castle Lecter. At the very least, I haven’t seen a single one. Count Lecter is far from ugly, so I can’t imagine why he has chosen to rid his home of any method at seeing his own reflection. I long to be home with you sweet Alana, and rid my mind of the foolish anxieties that plague me in this place.

Yours always,

Will Graham

The young man rolled over in bed restlessly. He had heard a strange cackle from somewhere down the hall from his room. The hair on his arms stood on end. When he heard his door unlatch somehow from the exterior and creak open, he sat up straight.

Standing in the doorway were two beautiful women in white, generously draped nightgowns. One of them had long light brown hair and the other had curls as red as her lips. They seemed to slide as they walked toward him.

“Hello?” he croaked. He scooted back in his bed as they started to climb in with them. The brunette kissed the other, running her hands over the small breasts under her nightgown. Will’s mouth parted in astonishment.

“Hello,” the redhead cooed, turning to him and brushing the back of her hand against his face. He glanced back and forth between them, completely bewildered. The brunette began to run her hand up his leg.

“Madam,” he muttered, pushing her hand away.

She returned his gesture with a hard slap across his face. Will was too shocked to even speak, wiggling his jaw through the pain of the strike.

The brunette grabbed Will by the ankles and pulled hard, yanking him down to a reclined position.

“What are you doing?” he called out, trying to sit up. The redhead pushed him back again. She pinned him down with her knees on other sides of his neck, and pulled her nightgown up over head.

Will looked up to see her vulva covered in fine auburn pubic hair.

“No,” he grunted, trying to push her off of him. She held his arms above his head with ferocious strength. He felt the brunette’s hands sliding off his underwear. He froze when she began to stroke him.

“Please, stop,” he cried. The woman above him sat down on his face, smothering his words. Her wet slit moved against his mouth.

Will felt his cock stiffen against his will in the hands of the other woman. He began to panic and tried to writhe away in vain. The redhead raised herself. He tried to beg them once more but she slapped him even harder than before.

“Lick,” she barked, and sat down again.

Will extended his tongue inside of her and began to lap. She allowed him to breathe, so long as he continued to obey her command.

Suddenly he felt a sting. His shriek was muffled by the woman above him. The brunette was biting him, hard, on his chest. She pulled on his flesh with her teeth, plunging them into him and drawing blood. He moaned and whimpered as she sucked on the wound and licked up the blood.

Will began to suffocate as the redhead grinded down on him. Tears streamed down his face as he wriggled underneath of her.

“Lick,” she hissed.

He obeyed, desperate for air, and she lifted just enough for him to breathe through his nose. The smell of her was enticing and the brunette still fondled him as she chewed and sucked on his chest. His body ached from resistance to them, and he began to tremble. Finally he lay still and let them do what they would with him.

He heard the redhead moaning loudly and she began to gyrate against his open mouth as he flicked his tongue over her clitoris. The other woman straddled him and guided his cock inside of her. She rode him with rough, bucking movements. He whined pitifully as his own hips began to move with her. The woman smothering him between her legs began to come loudly, grinding down on him and going into full-body spasms.

When she climbed off he gasped for air. He was beyond pleading with them and his eyes darted back and forth, terrified of these cruel, preternaturally strong women. The redhead kept his arms pinned down when she moved her mouth over his throat. He could feel her jagged teeth pressing against him, and then biting deep. His eyes rolled back in his head as she sucked the blood from him.

“Margot, Freddie, stop this at once!” a deep voice called out. Both women jumped off of Will and grabbed their nightgowns. Count Lecter stood in the doorway. Will could only lie there exhausted, body twitching and cock hard and wet. Blood trickled from his neck and chest. He turned his head toward Count Lecter, reaching out for him.

“Would you bleed him dry?” he shouted at them. They quickly bolted from the room, giggling as though the cruelty they’d just inflicted upon the young man was a schoolgirl’s game.

“He is for me,” Will thought he heard the Count command as he followed the women out of the room and slammed the door. He put his hand to his throat and touched the blood. Then he passed out.

Chapter 2

Will's head was pounding fiercely as he climbed out of bed. His sheets were stained with his own blood. He dressed himself quickly and packed his belongings.

"Mr. Graham," Count Lecter's voice called out to him as he descended the staircase.

"Count Lecter," Will replied, walking briskly toward the door. "Thank you for your hospitality, but I would like to leave now. The purchase of Castle Carfax is fully in order."

Lecter watched him as he tried to pull open the door. It stood fast.

"I am astonished, Mr. Graham," Lecter replied. Randall stood beside him, hands clasped in front of his waistcoat. "You have lost the good graces I previously attributed to you."

"I believe I am being perfectly gracious, considering the circumstances," Will snapped. "If you would, please, open this door for me."

"It would be far more gentlemanly of you if you would stay a bit longer."

Will stared back at him in utter disbelief. The man had witnessed his assault last night, and still he acted as if nothing had happened?

"Open this door, now!" he barked.

Suddenly he felt a strange heat fall upon him. Count Lecter's eyes were boring into him. It felt as though an anesthetic gas was surrounding him. He dropped his bag and slowly slumped to his knees.

"You are in my home, Mr. Graham," Count Lecter droned, striding toward him. "You are at my whim. And you will show me the proper etiquette."

"Please…" Will begged, terrified.

Lecter placed his hand on the young man's throat and examined the bite wound that was bruising there.

"I would not let them drain you," he said. His voice was hypnotic, his eyes like liquid magma. "Thank me for that."

"Thank you," Will croaked. The pressure building around him pressed upon his spine and caused his head to throb even more.

"There's a good lad," Count Lecter replied. He released his hand from Will's throat and walked away. The removal of his gaze filled him with relief and he collapsed onto the floor.

Lecter turned back to him and Will trembled.

“You will write your Alana,” he said. “You will tell her that you will be here much longer than anticipated.”

“Why?” Will asked, trying to stand up. Lecter’s eyes narrowed and Will held up a hand.

“Because I have use for you.”

When Count Lecter left the room, Will hurried from door to door, window to window, desperately trying to find one that opened. Every exit was sealed to him. The only door left open was to his own bedchamber, and the windows were high off of the ground. Panic filled him once more and he paced his room trying to think of how he could escape from his prison.

That night, Randall brought him his supper on a tray.

“Help me,” he whispered to the young man. He only blinked and stared back at him, expression wholly apathetic to his plight.

The next day Count Lecter visited him in his room.

“How long do you intend to keep me here?” Will asked.

“Have you written Alana?”

“No!”

Lecter advanced on him with long strides. He lifted him by the collar and pushed him into the chair by the desk. Will crumbled in fear of the man’s strength.

“Write to your fiancée,” he growled. “Tell her that you must stay longer, and make it very convincing.”

Will leaned over the desk and began to write the words that he feared may doom him.

Dear Alana,

I regret that my visit to Castle Lecter must extend longer than I previously assumed. I miss you dreadfully and I hope that we will be together again soon.

Sincerely,

Will Graham

He handed the letter to Count Lecter who read it carefully for any clues to Will’s distress. Then he folded it and tucked it into his pocket.

“Please,” Will implored, “Tell me why I am here. What matter of man are you?”

“I am more than a man,” Lecter replied.

He reached out and lifted Will’s chin with his fingers. Will tried not to meet his gaze, but was pulled into it. He felt himself cowering before him.

That night, Will stared down from his window at the ground far below. The walls of the castle were made of jagged stones. He could conceive of climbing, but he could also conceive of falling and breaking his back on the rocks below. He heard a sound behind him and turned quickly.

Margot and Freddie stood in the doorway once more, grins displaying their sharp fangs.

“No,” Will cried, shaking his head. Count Lecter walked in behind them and he sighed with relief.

“I never properly introduced my dear sisters,” Lecter said. The casual tone of his voice was eerie for the situation. “Margot… and Freddie.”

They each waved when their name was said.

“They were so terribly rude last night, and they’ve come to apologize.”

They both frowned dramatically and Freddie traced a false tear along her cheek.

“From now on,” Count Lecter assured, “They will not touch you without my permission.”

Will shuddered.

“Go on now,” Lecter urged them away, “Leave us.”

When the women were gone, Count Lecter approached Will. He took his head in his hands and studied his face. Will tried not to shake, but looked up at him in defiance.

“What are you planning on doing with me?” he asked.

“When you first arrived, I sensed something about you,” Lecter explained, “An openness of the mind. Not to things of ill logic, mind you, but to the influence of others. You are capable of being molded in a way I’ve never felt before, even in my pet Randall.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You are my thrall, Will Graham,” Lecter told him. “You will do as I command. You will not only obey, but you will live for my approval. Nothing else in this world will matter to you as much as my pleasure.”

Will tried to push back from Count Lecter’s grip. He felt the heat on him again and looked up into his eyes. He felt his body reacting to him. His knees began to give out and he kneeled on the floor.

“You are my thrall,” Lecter said.

“I am your thrall,” he repeated.

“You will do as I command.”

“I will do as you command.”

Count Lecter placed his leg between Will’s, pushing it up against his groin. Will’s cock began to twitch and stiffen.

“If I tell you to be as my dog, you will be my dog. If I tell you to eat bugs, and rats, and other crawling things, that is what you will do with no question.”

Will whimpered, his hands on the floor. He couldn’t understand what was happening to him. His head felt as though it were flooding with warm liquid. He gazed up at the beautiful man who stood over him, petting his hair and cradling his head and nothing seemed more enticing to him than to just give in.

Lecter brought Will’s head against his thigh and held it in place. He smiled when he felt the young man kiss. He pushed his leg further against his crotch. Will began to move ever so slightly, rubbing himself along his leg.

“Good lad,” the Count whispered.

Will breathed heavily and humped faster, desperate noises escaping from his throat. He clutched at the back of Lecter’s leg, kissing his thigh while looking up at him with wide eyes. When Lecter pulled away from him, he fell onto his hands and gasped. He was overcome with humiliation.

“What are you doing to me?” he groaned.

“I am bringing you into my world. You will never know such bliss, Will.”

Count Lecter left him alone and Will fell into his bed, his body tense. He rolled over onto his back and began to stroke himself. He bit his lip and ran his fingers through his hair, hearing the words Lecter spoke to him repeat in his mind. But try as he might, he couldn’t come. He pushed his pants down over his hips, wet his palm, and stroked until he was covered in sweat and painfully sensitive. His cock lurched and he ached with need, but no relief would come. His frustration mounted as he flipped back onto his stomach again and humped at the mattress until he couldn’t stand the tantalizing build up and utter failure to release. He cried in confusion and despair and tried instead to fall asleep.

Chapter 3

Will Graham was abruptly awakened in the small hours of the morning by the lascivious sisters. He sat up and climbed away from them on his bed.

“You are not to touch me,” he exclaimed.

“Not without Hannibal’s permission,” Margot reminded him. “We have permission to bring you out of this room, by any means necessary.”

“I will come willingly,” he insisted, “Let me get dressed, please.”

“You don’t need to be dressed,” Freddie hissed. They grabbed him by the arms and dragged him out of the room.

Count Lecter waited for him in the study. He clutched a length of rope in his hand. The women ran ahead of Will and lounged on the white silk chaise. Margot draped herself over Freddie, her head in her sister’s lap as they both stared at Will in amusement.

“I have come to the most magnanimous decision,” Lecter told him, “To allow you to be more than just my thrall. Your mind is so receptive to me and I sense great capacity for intuition. I’ve decided to make you my new pet.”

“My absence will not go unnoticed for long,” Will replied. He eyed the rope in Count Lecter’s hands and felt goose bumps scatter over his skin. “Many people at home in England know where I am.”

“Empty resistance,” the Count said. “Especially given that I know your propensity for obedience, and a thinly repressed desire for subjugation.”

“My only desire is to return home. I will tell no one of how you have treated me here, I promise you.”

“Take off your clothes, Will,” Lecter responded in a nonchalant tone.

Will stared at the Count then looked over at the women who were snickering behind their hands.

“What?”

Lecter turned his eyes toward him and the young man gasped. The muscles in his neck strained as he felt the overwhelming sensation that he must comply, that he wanted to comply. He couldn’t resist the strange power of the Count’s gaze.

He pulled off his nightshirt and drawers and dropped them on the floor. The women licked their unnaturally red lips and stared at his body. Will felt his genitals tingle and swell as his neck and face grew hot.

“One more desirable attribute,” Count Lecter said, “Is your tendency to become aroused when humiliated or frightened.”

“You can’t just snatch people who come over to dinner and turn them into playthings,” Will declared, fighting back tears.

“Down on all fours, pet,” Lecter commanded. Will fell to his knees then placed his hands on the floor. “Crawl to me.”

He had no choice but to obey. He crawled toward Count Lecter as he sat down on a chair; legs spread open to welcome him to the spot in front of him. As he approached, he could feel his cock jostling with his movements, nearly hitting his belly. He hung his head in disgust with his body’s reaction to being treated this way.

He crawled between Lecter’s legs and the Count twirled his finger in the air, instructing him to turn his back toward him. Will sat on his haunches and didn’t attempt to move when Lecter began to wrap the rope around his neck and through and around his arms multiple times, tightening them together so that the elbows nearly touched behind his back. He winced as the rope pulled snug at his throat and caused his shoulders to stretch backward.

Count Lecter grabbed Will by his hair and pulled his head back, leaning down to press his teeth against his neck. Will’s cock jumped as he felt the sharp fangs drag over his sensitive skin. Lecter stood up and pulled the rope at his throat, causing him to walk on his knees to the space between the couch and the chair. He tried not to look at the women, who were watching him with pitiless eyes.

“Let’s demonstrate for Margot and Freddie how receptive you are,” Lecter said.

“Please… don’t do this,” Will begged.

His captor narrowed his eyes and gazed at him, and Will felt waves of tingling, blissful heat rush over his body. He quivered and nearly fell over. He felt unbearable desire growing in his belly and his cock grew so stiff that it began to ache. Pre-cum dripped from him onto the ornate rug. He wriggled in his bonds, desperate to touch himself, but he could only scratch at the skin of his backside. He spread his knees apart and sat lower on his haunches, leaning back and humping at the air. He heard the sound of Margot and Freddie clapping.

“How does that feel, Will?” Count Lecter asked.

Will could only respond with a quaking, breathless moan. Another wave hit him and he flopped forward onto the ground, rubbing himself up against the rug, ass moving up and down. Shame overcame him. His ears, face, and throat burned with it. He clenched his fists behind his back but couldn’t stop his desperate attempts at achieving friction. Count Lecter smiled at his pathetic crying.

“Would you like me to touch you, Will?” he asked.

Will shuddered and whimpered into the carpet. Lecter walked to him and lifted him up to his knees by his hips, holding his head down on the floor. Will trembled in the groveling position

with his head lowered and his ass raised.

“Would you like me to touch you?” Lecter repeated.

“Yes, please, yes,” Will admitted, his voice wracked with desperation. The Count reached between Will’s legs and began to fondle him. The young man moaned and arched his back, spreading his knees further apart.

“You look like you want to be fucked,” Lecter murmured.

Will shook his head, tears soaking into the carpet beneath him. Lecter released his cock and moved his fingers instead to his ass. He gently nudged between his cheeks and Will’s mouth began to water as his tongue flicked in and out of his mouth.

“Do you want me to fuck you, Will?”

“Touch me,” Will begged.

“I’m finished stroking you, Will,” Count Lecter told him. “Do you want to be fucked, or do you want to be left alone?”

“No, don’t leave me like this,” Will cried.

“What do you want?”

Will bit his bottom lip and then pleaded, quiet at first, “Fuck me.”

Count Lecter continued to play with the opening to Will’s ass with his thumb, stroking his perineum with his fingers. Will pushed his hips out, arching his back even more.

“Fuck me, please,” the young man implored, louder now. “Please, yes, I want you to fuck me.”

Lecter stood up and lifted Will by the ropes around his arms, setting him on his feet. He took out a blade and cut the rope at his throat, then removed the bonds at his arms. Will sighed as blood began to rush back into his limbs and his shoulders ached from relaxation.

“Take him back to his room,” he told Margot and Freddie. They grabbed him by his arms and dragged him away. He looked over his shoulder at the Count.

The women pushed him into his room and shut the door. Will gasped and began to stroke himself, but found that once again it was build up without any hope of release. He screamed in frustration and threw a vase against the door.

My dear friend Dr. Frederick Chilton,

I am writing this letter to you because I am in a most desperate situation. I do not know what you could possibly do to help me, but I am at my wit's end. Many weeks ago my fiancé, Will Graham, embarked on a solicitor's visit to a Count Hannibal Lecter's estate in the Carpathian Mountains. Since then I have received regular letters, including three that were written after he arrived. The final letter was uncharacteristically brief and merely stated that he must stay longer than anticipated. That letter was received three weeks ago, and no more correspondence has taken place.

Please understand that my fiancé is not likely to cease writing to me for such an extended period. I am certain that something is very wrong. I've spoken to the police and mutual friends, but they all think me overreacting and say that he will undoubtedly be home soon. The fact that fills me with the most anxiety is that in the last letter Will wrote before telling me he was staying longer, he spoke of an ill feeling regarding the place in which he stayed. When I read that particular letter, I felt a great sense of dread. Please believe me when I insist that something is amiss. I've enclosed his letters for you to examine. Please advise me on what I should do and for the love of God do not brush me away as so many else have done.

Sincerely,

Alana Bloom

"What do you make of it?" Dr. Chilton asked. He twisted his fingers over the silver knob of his cane.

His mentor and friend read the letter in question. She sat straight in her chair, long blonde hair pinned up in a fashionable knot.

"No mirrors," she muttered, voice low.

"What's that?"

"Just a random observation," she replied.

"I don't know what I should say to Miss Bloom," Chilton said. "I fear there is no advice I can give except to enquire with the police if no more is heard of the man."

The woman nodded, but her eyes were darting over the letter once more and her brows were heavily furrowed.

There were only a few hours at mid-day that Will felt a sense of relief and clarity. Every other hour of each day he felt the oppressive influence of Count Lecter upon him. He crawled to him, ate from his hand, begged him to touch him and use him in any way he liked, and desired nothing else in the world than to be rewarded by him.

One day, when his mind cleared, he rushed to the desk and wrote a quick note.

To whom it may concern,

I am being held captive against my will in Count Hannibal Lecter's castle. He and two others abuse and torment me terribly for their entertainment. I cannot escape. Please send the police at once.

Will Graham

Will waited by a barred window downstairs, overlooking the garden. He had seen an old man come by every few days to tend the garden, and hoped to get his attention.

When the old man passed by, Will called out to him. The man looked startled for a moment but kept walking.

"Please!" Will cried. "Help me!"

The man tried to ignore him as he worked.

"I just need you to take this into town, give it to the police," Will begged. "Polizei, bitte!"

Finally the man looked up at him. His face showed the internal struggle he battled.

"Bitte, helfen," he urged, stretching his arms through the bars to hand him the letter. "Senden Polizei."

The old man looked around and then snatched the letter from Will's hand and stuffed it in his jacket pocket with a nod.

"Thank you… Danke," he sighed.

Chapter 4

As the sun began to fall behind the Carpathian Mountains, Will felt intensely frightened. He knew Count Lecter had awakened. He could feel his clutch on his mind and heart once more. He walked toward the door and fell on his knees, head lowered.

The Count burst into his room. Will saw the stern look on his face and began to quake.

"What is this?" Lecter growled, pulling the note out of his waistcoat pocket.

Will felt his insides turn to cold jelly. He gasped and bowed forward, touching his forehead to the floor. It was all he could do, for speech was beyond his ability at this moment. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the Count walk to his bedroom fireplace and toss the note into the flames. The printed words themselves seemed to catch fire and burn through the paper.

"Follow me, now," Count Lecter commanded.

Will struggled to stand on his quivering legs. He followed after the man, head down. He brought him to the front door, which stood open. Will hung back, staring out into the open space. The driveway stretched out away from the estate, leading in the direction he had come from.

"Come here!" Lecter barked. Will slowly walked toward the door, trying not to show any sign that he might make a run for it. When he approached, he saw the gardener standing in the drive, clutching his hat and speaking very quickly in German. Too quickly for Will's small grasp of the language to comprehend. When he saw Will in the doorway, he stopped speaking, but stared at him with blaming eyes.

"I made him, it's not his fault," Will stammered.

"Randall!" Lecter called out. Will felt his skin crawl when he saw the young manservant come forward. He wasn't walking with his usual refined posture and gait. Now he loped across the yard on squatting legs and arms like a beast.

Count Lecter whistled, and Randall leapt forward, running toward the man with tremendous speed. He tackled him and knocked him to the ground easily, then began to tear at his throat with bared teeth. The man’s shrieking filled the sky.

"No!" Will screamed, clutching his head in his hands.

Randall ripped away chunks of the gardener's throat, spitting them out onto the pavement. The old man twitched and gurgled for a few more seconds, then became still.

The beast-man returned to the Count, still hobbling forward in an animal's pose. Lecter pet his head and the young man's eyes closed as he smiled, allowing him to scratch him behind his ears.

Will stared at the carnage in horror. When Randall neared him, he recoiled. Blood smeared his face and trickled down to his waistcoat. But he was calm. He rubbed his face against Lecter's hand as a cat might.

“Come, Will,” Lecter commanded, walking back inside.

Randall stood as a man once more and closed the great doors. He pulled a handkerchief from his waistcoat and wiped the blood from his face.

Will followed the Count into the study and Margot and Freddie joined them, frolicking beside Will and taunting him.

“Has someone been a naughty boy?” Freddie asked, poking him as he practically limped from fear.

Count Lecter sat in his chair and lifted a glass of wine that had been breathing on the end-table. He waved his sisters away from Will and they set their attentions instead on Randall, lapping at the blood that still stained his throat.

Will stood in the middle of the room, clenching and unclenching his fists. A profound sense of shame seemed to pull his heart down into his stomach.

“I can see you regret your audacious display of ingratitude,” Lecter droned.

Will trembled.

“I’m sorry, Count Lecter,” he struggled to say.

Lecter sipped the wine, sucking it through his teeth and letting it linger on his palate. When he turned his eyes upon Will once more, the young man began to sob with his head in his hands.

“Was I wrong,” Lecter continued, “In believing that you could be my most cherished pet?”

“No, Sir,” Will stammered. The weight of his transgression was unbearable to him. He longed to be in the Count’s good graces once more.

Lecter only sighed and looked away despondently.

“Perhaps I should be content with my loyal Randall,” he said.

Will glanced over at the man in question. He looked very smug, enjoying the affections of Margot and Freddie. Will felt intense hatred for him. He looked back at Lecter’s indifferent expression and felt his knees shakes as his entire body yearned for release from what he felt. Of all the strange emotions and sensations Count Lecter pressed upon him, this was by far the worst. He fell on his knees and lifted his hands toward the Count.

“Punish me!” he cried out. “Please, I need to be punished!”

Margot and Freddie broke out into terrible giggling.

“Yes, punish him!” Margot cheered, hopping and clapping. “Let us punish him!”

Freddie joined in on the request.

Lecter shrugged and stood up. He walked to a nearby cabinet. He opened it to reveal canes and straps and a long-tailed whip. He pulled the whip from its hook and ran the lashes between his fingers.

He sighed again, “What good would it be to punish you, dear boy? Will you not betray me tomorrow?”

“No, Sir,” Will begged. He stripped off his shirt and lowered his head to the floor in groveling position. “Please, beat me. Beat me within an inch of my life, only please forgive me!”

Lecter walked closer and Will put his hands out on front of him, clasping them in supplication. He thought of the impending pain. He didn’t know if he could bear it, but he desperately needed to feel every bit of condemnation taken out on his hide. The fear and anticipation made his cock stir, and he squeezed his legs together and rocked back and forth with his forehead pressed to the rug.

“Perhaps I should let my sisters beat you instead,” Lecter considered. The women squealed at the prospect.

No, not them, Will thought. Nothing could be more humiliating than to be whipped by those heartless women while they laughed and sneered at him. He cowered.

“Would you allow them to punish you for my honor?” Lecter asked, standing over the young man. Will looked up at him, hands still folded in prayer.

“Whatever would please you… Master.”

Lecter grinned and said, “No, that is not what would please me most.”

He bent down and lifted Will’s head by the chin. He sat on his haunches and gazed up at the Count, pleading with his eyes. Then, Lecter handed him the whip. Will hesitated for a moment, and then took it in his hands. He watched as the Count returned to his chair and sat with legs crossed, sipping his wine and staring back at him over the edge of his glass.

Will stretched the whip in his hands, then reached out, letting the lashes dangle in front of him. Then he struck backward, slinging the tail of it against his own back. He grunted from the sting and looked for any change in expression from Lecter. The Count only sniffed and put his glass down.

He struck again, and again, each lash harder than the last. Soon he was screaming and leaning forward on one hand as he scourged himself. He watched Count Lecter’s face for any sign of appeasement. The gentleman held up his hand and Will stopped. He twitched from the pain he had caused himself.

“You may stop, Will,” Lecter murmured. He gestured to Randall who kneeled beside his chair. Lecter pet him and the boy laid his head on the armrest and smirked back at Will.

Will shivered. The Count would not even look at him.

“Please forgive me,” he whispered. He began to strike himself again, so viciously that it drew blood. He screamed as the lashes fell over his back, leaving terrible red stripes on his flesh.

Count Lecter watched intently. He gestured Randall to step aside.

“Come here, Will,” he called out. Will stopped and shook violently from pain and anxiety. He crawled to the Count.

“Give me the whip,” Lecter ordered. Will lifted it to him with both hands, eyes lowered. Lecter lifted his chin and smiled down on him, which caused the young man to cry in relief. He held the whip to his lips, and Will kissed it over and over. He tasted his own blood on his lips and it was wonderful to him.

“Good lad,” Lecter murmured. He dropped the whip and brought Will between his legs. He let him lay his head on his thigh as he stroked his hair.

“Did you force him to continue?” Margot asked.

“No I did not,” Lecter mused. He caressed the side of Will’s face. “You are mine, aren’t you Will?”

“Yes, Master,” Will replied, nuzzling the Count’s groin with his lips and nose. “I am yours.”

“Tell me you love me, Will.”

Will kissed and nudged him eagerly.

“I love you, Master.”

Alana Bloom paced in the salon of her home. Her dark hair was escaping the pins at her temples and falling around her face in tendrils. Her eyes were touched with fatigue. When her maid rapped on the door, she nearly jumped.

“Come in,” she called, clearing her throat.

“This arrived for you just now, mum,” the young lady said, handing her a letter.

It was marked from the office of Dr. Frederick Chilton. As soon as she opened it she knew it was not his scratchy handwriting, but a large looping sort. She fell into her chair when she read what it said.

I believe you.

Professor Bedelia Du Maurier

Chapter 5

Morning came and again Will felt a great sense of clarity. The memories of how he groveled for Count Lecter and begged for his approval filled him with disgust. Every day he grew more attached to him, more desperate to be close to him and do his bidding. He knew he must escape now, before it was too late. He looked out the window of his bedroom and the great distance to the bottom. Quickly, he began to pull his sheets and blankets off of his bed and tie them tightly together. They were nowhere near long enough, but he lowered them out the window and tied one end to the sturdy bedpost, determined to scale the wall the rest of the way down.

As one last thought, he dug through his belongings until he found the rosary tucked away in his luggage. Perhaps the promise of its power was nonsense, but after all that he'd seen, he wasn't certain of anything anymore. He hung it around his neck and started to climb down the rope.

The rocks in the wall were prominent and jagged. When he came to the end of the rope, he slowly climbed downward, arms aching from his weight and the nearly paralyzing terror of what would happen to him if he didn't succeed. He made a misstep, and nearly lost his balance. He caught himself and peered downward at the hard surface that his bones were nearly dashed upon.

Alana he thought to himself. *Alana, Alana.* As he made his descent, the thought in his head surfaced to his lips and soon he was whispering her name to the wall.

"I'm coming, Alana," he muttered, hands raw from the rough stones. "I'm coming home."

To whom it may concern, Transylvania police

I am writing to enquire about a gentleman who has gone missing in your area. A solicitor by the name of Will Graham traveled into the Carpathian Mountains to an estate called Castle Lecter. Evidence suggests, and as such I have come to believe, that some form of catastrophe has befallen him.

It would be of great use to the investigation into his disappearance if any information could be provided on the lord of the estate, Count Hannibal Lecter. I would also strongly suggest that a search party be set out in the vicinity of the castle and that the Count himself be asked if he has any information as to Mr. Graham's whereabouts. Please inform me immediately if there are any developments.

Thank you for your assistance,

Professor Bedelia Du Maurier

Captain Abel Gideon was not a superstitious man, despite the reputation that sailors have of being so. Regardless, the nights on board his ship, The Demeter, were growing ever more ominous. He had picked up cargo coming from the east, and every night since more of his crew had gone missing. Now The Demeter was very poorly manned, and he could no longer lock himself in his cabin. He could no longer sleep, even if he could coax himself to do so.

A heavy fog hung over the sea and Whitby was still a day off. The moon loomed on the horizon and seemed ready to devour his entire ship.

“If I have to lash myself to this wheel,” Abel declared, “I will return home.”

He didn’t like the boy. Randall was his name. He insisted that the long, narrow boxes he was escorting to England not be meddled with. They were marked *Castle Carfax*. He was dressed in the most refined and fashionable attire, but something about his mannerisms set the old sea captain on edge. A glassiness to his eyes, a static quality to his expressions, with nothing more than the occasional twitch of a facial muscle in response to being spoken to. When he walked, he seemed to tiptoe as though uneasy with the use of his own legs.

When screams jolted Captain Abel from his drowsy stance at the wheel, he called out for someone to relieve him so he could investigate. No one responded. He shivered and maintained his hold on it until morning broke. Finally, he could bear it no more and tied the wheel into position with a length of rope. He rushed to the cargo hold.

He could have sworn the boxes had been stacked on top of one another. Now they lay side by side. He picked up a crowbar and began to pry one open.

“I must insist that you stop what you are doing, Captain,” a placid voice came from behind him.

He spun around, crowbar raised. Randall stood before him and stared back with glassy eyes.

“To hell with you,” Abel coughed. “I don’t know what is in these damnable boxes, but no good has come of any of it.”

“Such nonsense,” Randall replied, but his voice lacked any sense of humor.

“Get back into your quarters or so help me God I will throw you overboard with whatever is in these crates!”

Randall lowered his head toward one of the boxes.

“Apologies, Master,” he said in a hushed tone. “Your last meal on this ship will have to be cancelled.”

“What did you just say?” Abel cried.

Randall did not repeat himself, and no one was left on board to hear the old Captain’s oncoming screams.

Alana sat at her desk, trying to think of how to correspond with this Professor Du Maurier. Weeks more had passed, and she hadn't heard another word from Will.

Her maid ran in without knocking.

"Apologies, mum," she breathed, "But Mr. Graham has returned."

Alana stood up and ran out to the drive. A carriage had pulled up and Will climbed out slowly. He looked like death. When he saw her, he almost seemed to disbelieve that she was real.

"Will!" she cried and ran to embrace him. He shivered in her arms and kissed her.

"Alana, Alana, Alana," he repeated.

She pressed his head to her breast and kissed the top of his head.

"Where have you been?" she whispered. "God in heaven, what has happened to you?"

Alana told the maid to fill the bath. Will looked as though he hadn't been clean in ages. Any time she pulled away from him even for a moment he clutched at her as though he would drown if she weren't there. She undressed him for the bath and removed the crucifix that hung around his neck and placed it on a chair. She stopped short when she saw the marks on his back.

"Who did this to you?" she exclaimed.

"No one," he muttered. "No one."

She helped him into the tub and he winced when the hot water touched his stripes. She knelt next to the tub and began to wash him. He stared ahead, clutching his knees to his chest.

When he was clean, she put him to bed where he fell asleep almost instantly. Will slept for the rest of the day and was still asleep when Alana climbed into bed with him. He whimpered and stirred, but didn't wake. She stroked his hair and nestled against him until she fell asleep.

When she opened her eyes again, the room was partially illuminated by the moon. She looked at the pillow next to her and noticed Will's absence. When she got out of bed, she could see that the back door to the garden was standing open.

"Will?" she called out. She pulled on a shawl and stepped outside.

As she walked along the path, she could see Will standing at the edge near a row of trees. He was reaching upward toward the moon. She could hear him mumbling, but couldn't make out what he was saying.

“Will,” she whispered, coming up beside him. He didn’t look away from the moon. “Will, come back to bed, darling.”

She led him back to the room.

“He’s here,” Will told her.

“Who is here?” Alana asked.

“The Master,” he replied. “The Master has come.”

Dr. Chilton lounged on his couch, tampering with a phonograph.

“You do so love that silly contraption,” Bedelia scoffed.

“I use it to record sessions with my patients,” Chilton insisted. He wrapped the dappled paper around the metal spool and began to turn the crank. The tinny, muffled sound of his own voice played back to him.

“Recording therapy sessions contaminates the study,” Bedelia replied. She tapped at the wooden arms of her chair with her fingernails.

“How so?”

“When the subject is aware that they are being recorded, he or she alters speech, inhibits oneself, etc.”

Chilton laughed, “Well, that’s why I don’t let them know they are being recorded.”

A sly smile crossed her lips. She reached for the newspaper on his desk and flipped through it.

The Demeter washed up on the shores of Whitby yesterday evening, empty of all crew. One passenger remained on board, a young Randall Tier, who claimed that the crew had evacuated by lifeboat in the night and left him alone. Mr. Tier was escorting luggage to Castle Carfax for his benefactor, Count Hannibal Lecter.

Bedelia sat up straight.

“Have you read the paper this morning?” she asked.

“Not just yet,” Chilton replied, trying to keep the phonograph paper from unraveling too quickly.

“Count Hannibal Lecter has taken up residence in Castle Carfax,” she pointed out. “The very same man your friend’s fiancé was traveling to visit.”

“Ah yes,” Chilton said. “I just received word from Miss Alana Bloom today, in fact. Will Graham has returned home.”

Bedelia looked surprised, but then relaxed into her chair again.

“Then I suppose it was all a misunderstanding.”

Chilton murmured in agreement.

“She has told me he is in a bad way, though,” he added. “He sleep-walks every night and mutters incoherently. Also he is running a high fever. She’s sent for me to come visit him.”

“I would like to see him as well, if you don’t mind,” Bedelia said.

Chapter 6

Will slipped out of bed quietly, glancing at Alana. She was fast asleep. He left the house and walked along the path to the horse stables. Inside, the horses slumbered, making low noises in their stalls.

“I can hear you calling to me,” Will whispered. “I know you are there.”

You have betrayed me once more.

Will put his head in his hands and shuddered to hold back a scream. Every inch of his body was punishing him. The dual personas he hopped back and forth between were killing him. One of them had to die, and at this moment it seemed that it would be the one who resisted Count Lecter.

“I was weak,” Will said. “I am still weak.”

I can make you strong.

“Please, yes, Master!”

The medley of shame and desire that coursed through him was overwhelming. He stripped away his nightshirt and grabbed a horse whip from the stable wall.

“Forgive me, Master, for my weakness,” he prayed, and began to strike himself. The pain transformed into pleasure and he threw his head back, moaning and crying out with the lash.

A dark figure appeared at the end of the stable hall. Will continued to whip himself as he watched him inch closer. He reached out to him with his free hand. The horses had stirred from the noise and began to back away in their stalls. As the figure approached, they whinnied and bucked, sensing the presence of something unnatural.

“Will?” Alana’s voice cried out in the noise. The figure vanished just as he was about to touch him.

Alana entered the stable and gasped. Will was on his hands and knees, crying and holding a horse whip. His back was covered with newly-created stripes. She ran to him and tried to stand him up. He turned to her and his face was filled with anger.

“Why have you interrupted him?” he shouted.

Chilton lifted his cane and stepped out the carriage, then turned to raise his hand for Bedelia. They were greeted immediately by Alana Bloom.

“Frederick,” she announced, throwing her arms around him. “Thank you so much for coming. Will is extremely ill and I do not know what to make of it.”

She curtsied to Bedelia and Chilton introduced the professor.

“This is my most esteemed mentor and colleague, Professor Bedelia Du Maurier. A philosopher and metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of her day.”

Bedelia curtsied back to Alana.

“You wrote to me,” Alana realized. “You told me that you believed me.”

“I did,” Bedelia acknowledged. “I am glad that your Will has made it safely home. I should like to examine him.”

“Yes, of course, please do,” Alana replied.

She led them both in the room and found Will tossing in his sleep, covered in perspiration. Chilton stood over him and felt the young man’s face and neck. Will’s eyes snapped open and he snatched at Chilton’s hand. His eyes were filled with panic.

“The Master is coming,” he slurred. “His race will defile the weak and uplift the strong.”

Chilton pulled his hand away, grimacing.

“He has been talking like that for days,” Alana said.

Bedelia approached the bed and helped Will sit up. He twitched at her touch.

“Please,” she told him. “Tell us about the Master.”

As she listened to Will, she ran her fingers over the puncture wounds on his neck and chest.

“He will transform the innocent and chastise the impure,” he said.

“How will he transform the innocent?”

“By bringing them into his great family. He will amass a great army of the undead to subjugate all those who defy him.”

“Has he transformed you, Will?” Bedelia asked.

Will closed his eyes and looked downcast.

“Not yet,” he mourned. “Perhaps he will, when I am strong enough.”

Chilton examined his eyes.

“He appears to have some form of brain fever,” he remarked. “Something he picked up in his travels, no doubt.”

“Let me show you the worst of it,” Alana said. She leaned Will forward so that they could see the marks on his back. “I caught him in the stables, beating himself with a horsewhip. He told me he did it to beg the Master’s forgiveness.”

“Alana, I’m sorry to have to suggest this, I know you love this man dearly,” Chilton said. “I think Will should come and stay in my sanitarium for the time being. He must be monitored. For his sake and yours, I hope this delirium is caused by the fever and will subside when he is cured of it.”

Alana reluctantly agreed and she dressed Will and brought him to the carriage.

“I know you will take great care of him,” she told Dr. Chilton.

“Of course,” he reassured her.

“All will be worked out, Miss Bloom,” Bedelia said.

Alana watched as they carried her fiancé away. She had grown exhausted from lack of sleep due to his illness, but still she questioned if she had done the right thing.

Abigail Hobbs squatted in the sparse grass of the heath, holding out bread to a chipmunk. She was only five years old and the sun was falling, but she believed that now she might be able to snatch one. She wanted to hold it in her hand and know that she had caught it. The chipmunk inched closer and finally grabbed at the bread with his tiny hand-like paws. She darted her other hand over and grabbed him. The chipmunk squeaked and tried to bite her, but she held his head with her fingers.

“What will you do with it now?” a voice came from above. A pair of boots stood in front of her.

“Oh!” she exclaimed, releasing the creature. She looked up sheepishly, a little ashamed at having been caught in an act of semi-cruelty. A beautiful woman with bright red curls smiled down at her.

“I’m sure you only meant to pet it nicely,” the woman cooed.

“Yes, of course,” Abigail agreed, smiling and standing up. Then she added, “You have pretty hair.”

“Why thank you, sweet girl,” the woman said, bending down. “Your hair is very pretty too.”

“It is only brown,” Abigail replied.

“Brown is the color of tall trees, and soft earth, and…” she reached into her purse and pulled out a piece of candy. “Chocolate!”

Abigail’s eyes widened as she took the sweet.

“Thank you!” she laughed.

“It is also the color of my dear sister’s hair,” the woman continued. “Would you like to meet her? She is very pretty, and loves clever little girls who catch animals.”

“It is getting late,” Abigail hesitated.

“It will only be for a moment, dear,” the woman insisted. “We live in a beautiful castle.”

“A castle?” Abigail exclaimed. She was quite excited to see what the inside of a castle looked like. She took the woman’s hand and walked with her. “My name is Abigail.”

“I am Freddie, and my sister is called Margot,” the woman replied. “Oh, she will be so pleased to meet you, as am I.”

“Abigail!” Mrs. Hobbs called out from the front porch. “Abigail, come home!”

She searched over the heath near their house and hurried along the path where her daughter usually played.

“Abigail!” she cried, growing anxious.

When her husband joined her and the sun was no longer peeking over the horizon, they became frantic.

“Please, sir, have you seen a little girl with dark hair in braids?” Garrett Jacob Hobbs asked a gentleman who was going for a stroll.

“I am sorry, I haven’t,” he replied.

“Abigail!” Mr. Hobbs shouted. “Please, has anyone seen our daughter?”

Bedelia shared breakfast with Dr. Chilton and pored over the daily newspaper.

“How is your new patient?” she asked.

“Will Graham? He is delirious still. I’ve given him a cocktail of medications to break his fever, but still he raves on.”

“About the Master?”

“Yes, he insists that the Count he visited has come to England to rule us all with some kind of sorcery.”

Bedelia sipped her tea.

“I had to have his belt and other items removed from his cell,” Chilton added. “He’s been self-inflicting punishment. He appears to get some form of sexual arousal from it.”

“Masochism as a symptom of brain fever,” Bedelia mused.

“I’ve seen ailments do all sorts of unspeakable things to the mind,” Chilton replied.

She turned the page of the paper. She paused for a moment then read aloud.

“The neighborhood of Hampstead is just at present exercised with several cases of young children straying from home or neglecting to return from their playing on the Heath. In all these cases the children were too young to give any properly intelligible account of themselves, but the consensus of their excuses is that they had been with a "ruby lady." It has always been late in the evening when they have been missed, and most returned home the following morning, but on two occasions the children have not been found until a couple of days later. It is generally supposed in the neighborhood that, as the first child missed gave as his reason for being away that a "ruby lady" had asked him to come for a walk, the others had picked up the phrase and used it as occasion served. There is, however, possibly a serious side to the question, for some of the children, indeed all who have been missed at night, have been slightly torn or wounded in the throat. The wounds seem such as might be made by a rat or a small dog. The police of the division have been instructed to keep a sharp lookout for straying children, especially when very young, in and around Hampstead Heath, and for any stray dog which may be about.”

“Most unusual,” Dr. Chilton responded. “At least they have not been seriously harmed.”

Mrs. Hobbs tried to sleep. It had been two nights since her daughter had disappeared and the police were at a loss. She had heard that missing children were arriving home safely, but her insides quivered at the thought of what could be happening to her little girl. If someone had taken her, what was their use for her?

She sat up when she heard a scratching at the window. Hurrying over, she lifted a candle to the glass. On the other side, her daughter’s face peered back at her.

“Abigail!” she cried, hurrying to unlatch the window. It took a moment to dawn on her that they were on the second story.

“Mother,” Abigail sighed.

Mrs. Hobbs gasped when she saw that the girl was floating in mid-air.

“Abigail… how…” she stepped back.

“It’s all right, mother,” Abigail assured her, “Just tell me I can come inside.”

“Yes, of course,” Mrs. Hobbs said. “Come inside my darling.”

Abigail landed on the sill and climbed into the bedroom.

“Come down here, mother,” she said, reaching her hand up. “I want to kiss you.”

Mrs. Hobbs felt a strange lulling sensation. She leaned toward her daughters lips.

Abigail kissed her on the cheek, then on the neck. Suddenly, she bared her teeth and plunged them into her mother’s throat. Mrs. Hobbs screamed and stood up, but Abigail latched on and wrapped her small legs around her torso, clinging to her and sucking her blood.

Garrett Jacob Hobbs awoke and jumped out of bed.

“Abigail?” he gasped. His daughter let go and his wife slumped to the floor.

“Father!” Abigail cheered.

“No!” Hobbs called out, staring at his wife, and then back at the little girl. “You are not my daughter.”

“Of course I am, father,” Abigail giggled, coming toward him. “Look at me.”

“No, I don’t know what you are, but you are not my daughter!”

He grabbed a rosary from his bedside table and held it out to her. Abigail hissed and flung her hands over her face. Then she turned and sprang out the window into the night.

Hobbs knelt down next to his wife and lifted her in his arms. She was dead.

Chapter 7

The moon seemed to peer through the bars into the cell, filling the floor with light and shadow that looked like a massive, stretching cage. Will lay on his side, staring at the long shadowy lines. Chilton had ordered that he be put in a strait-jacket in order to protect him from himself. He tried to pull his arms away from his bonds until they ached and he resigned to their uselessness. Now he squeezed his legs together and rocked. Being bound only made his cock harder. He rubbed his face against his pillow, longing to be petted.

“Will,” he heard the voice and twitched in his bed.

“Master,” he whispered.

“Will, I am here,” Count Lecter’s soft murmur came again, and he twisted his head around when he realized the voice was not in his head, but outside his window. He jumped out of bed and stepped into the moonlight. Lecter stood on the other side of the bars, reaching his hand through. Will hurried up to him and pressed his face against the outstretched hand.

“You’ve come for me,” the young man said.

“Invite me in, boy,” Lecter ordered.

“Please, come in,” Will replied and Lecter seemed to vanish. He looked around wildly and saw a small black raven flutter through the bars and into his cell. The raven’s wings grew around him and then opened as Count Lecter transformed into his human form once more. Will fell to his knees in front of him.

“Please, Master, release me,” he asked.

“Do you still love me, Will?”

Will gazed up at him, eyes wide.

“I do love you Master, I do.”

Lecter ran his fingers through Will’s shaggy curls and then over his face. He dragged his fingers across Will’s lips and he began to suck on them, eagerly taking them into his mouth. The Count grasped Will’s throat and pulled him toward himself, pressing the young man’s face against his groin.

Will’s breathing quickened and he groaned happily as he nuzzled and kissed. He felt Lecter swelling against his mouth and nose. Will rocked on his knees, desperately rubbing his own erection against the inside of his trousers. He wanted Lecter to extend his leg again, so that he could hump against him. He had been pressing himself up against his pillow and mattress, any surface he could. Sometimes he couldn’t help himself, even in front of Dr. Chilton. The doctor sat in his chair on the other side of the bars, gripping his cane and shaking his head when the patient began to wriggle uncontrollably.

“Patient exhibits constant sexual arousal, particularly when discussing the entity he refers to as ‘The Master,’” Chilton’s cold tone echoed off of the walls. “He doesn’t appear to ejaculate, which could be masochistic enjoyment caused by persistently withholding release.”

“I want release!” he had shouted back. “He won’t let me!”

“Why won’t he let you, Will?” Dr. Chilton asked.

“Because it gives him pleasure,” Will moaned, squirming on his cot, “To watch me writhe!”

Will was writhing now, burying his face into Count Lecter’s crotch.

“Do you want to please me?” the Count asked.

“More than anything,” he replied.

“More than your own pleasure?”

Will looked up at him. He was twitching uncontrollably from the unbearable arousal that had plagued him for so long.

“Yes, Master, I want to please you.”

Count Lecter pulled his cock out of his trousers, and pressed Will’s face against it. The young man began to kiss and lick it eagerly. He pulled on the sleeves of his strait-jacket, wanting to wrap his hands around it. Lecter pulled on the young man’s hair and guided his cock into his mouth. He smiled down at him as he sucked. Then he pushed his head flush against his groin, choking him.

He pulled Will’s head back again, and the young man gasped and coughed, his lips wet. He looked up at him with imploring eyes.

“Thank you, Master,” he said, his voice hoarse.

Count Lecter filled his mouth again and began to fuck it, moving his hips against his face and enjoying the gagging and sucking sounds he made. Finally he pulled out and held his thrall’s face in his hands, brushing the curls out of his eyes. He reached down and lifted him to his feet by his bound arms.

“I do love watching you writhe,” Lecter murmured, pushing his hand against Will’s swollen member. A shaky, guttural moan escaped the thrall’s throat and he pushed back against the hand.

“I’m glad,” Will replied, quivering all over.

“Do you still want me to fuck you?”

Will gasped and laid his head on Lecter’s shoulder.

“Yes, please, yes, fuck me,” he replied.

Lecter turned him around, grabbed him by the buckles of his strait jacket, and pushed him toward the bed. Will climbed onto it on his knees and slumped forward. His elbows pulled at the sleeves of the jacket and were unable to support him so he lay on his shoulders, cheek pressed against the mattress as he looked back at the Count.

Lecter slipped his hands under the waist of the boy's trousers and pulled them down, laying him bare. He clutched at Will's ass, squeezing his flesh and pulling him apart. Will shuddered and closed his eyes as the Count spat into the cleft of his cheeks and rubbed against his hole with his fingers.

"Beg me for it," Lecter commanded.

Will's cock jumped at his words. His whole body trembled at the prospect of being filled, stretched open, thrust into.

"Please, Master," he pleaded, spreading his knees apart and arching his back. "Please, fuck me. Fuck me until I can't take anymore, and then fuck me some more."

Will heard a low laugh from the Count and he looked back over his shoulder at him. He saw the man holding his still-wet cock and guiding it toward him and he whimpered and jutted out his hips to receive him.

As Lecter pushed inside of him, Will saw spots of light in his vision. He moaned loudly and pressed his face into the mattress to muffle himself.

"Thank you, oh God… thank you Master," he gasped.

Lecter thrust in and out of him, grasping onto the buckles of the boy's jacket for leverage. Will clenched his teeth from the ache, but he only wanted more. He wanted to be left bloody. His mouth and eyes began to water as he felt himself being stretched to accommodate the Count. His cock lurched with each thrust, dripping pre-cum onto the mattress.

"I want to see what you have inflicted upon yourself," Lecter growled. He unbuckled Will's jacket with rough movements, and pulled it loose. Then he pushed it up his back, revealing the vicious welts and stripes on his thrall's back.

The Count ran his hands over the sores, scratching them with his fingernails until Will was nearly crying.

"Punish me," he moaned, "Rip open my flesh and fuck me until I can't walk."

Count Lecter bared his teeth in a sadistic grin. He pounded into Will, slashing at his back with his fingernails and causing new stripes to emerge. Tears rolled down the boy's cheeks as he took the pain with the utmost pleasure.

Finally, Lecter lifted his thrall up off the bed and held his body against him, cock still inside of him. Will laid his head back on the Count's shoulder, stretching his neck for him. Lecter clutched the boy tightly and pressed his teeth against his throat.

"Yes," Will moaned.

When Lecter bit into him, Will's eyes rolled back into his head. His ass clenched around his master's cock and the vampire snarled as he came into him and sucked his blood at the same time. Will's sleeved arms fell to his sides as he let himself be drained.

"Thank you," he whispered.

Lecter released him and he slumped over, vision full of spots. Out of the corner of his eyes he could see the raven flying through the bars and out into the night.

"Somehow, he worked his way out of his strait-jacket," Dr. Chilton told Bedelia as they hurried along the hallway toward Will's cell. "I don't know what he used to injure himself, but he is completely ashen and barely responsive."

Dr. Du Maurier entered Will's cell and found him lying in the fetal position. She lifted the young man's head and touched the puncture wounds at his neck.

"He's low on blood," Bedelia told Chilton.

"How?" Chilton replied, looking around, "There's no blood anywhere."

"Trust me, Frederick," Bedelia said, stroking Will's hair. She leaned down toward his lips as he began to mutter.

"The Master came to me."

"He's going to be fine, but I suggest an immediate blood transfusion, just to be safe."

"What form of disease is this?" Chilton said, nodding in affirmation of her demand.

"A very old one indeed," Bedelia murmured. She stared down at the young man with pity in her eyes.

When they transferred Will to the hospital wing, Bedelia stopped to talk to a nurse.

"Have you any rosaries?" she asked.

"Yes, mum."

"Please, bring me at least a dozen if you can."

"Rosaries?" Chilton asked.

Bedelia turned and put her hand on Dr. Chilton's elbow.

"Your patient believes that he is under the influence of *Nosferatu*, a vampire lord. I suggest that you fill his room with rosaries, including one around his neck."

“Wouldn’t that only reinforce his delusion?”

Bedelia searched for her next words then stated, “Perhaps it will help him in the meantime, if he believes that the vampire has power over him, he may believe in the power of the rosary against it. That may help his mind to clear and his body to heal.”

Chilton nodded at the nurse and she hurried away.

Bedelia stared down at Will and reached for his hand. She held it as the nurses set up a blood transfusion.

“You poor man,” she whispered.

Will shook his head, barely conscious. A weak smile crossed his pale lips.

“He loves me.”

Chapter 8

“I don’t know which method worked,” Dr. Chilton mused, walking alongside Dr. Du Maurier and Alana Bloom. “The fever medication, or your blood transfusion, but he is quite the changed man.”

The three of them approached Will’s cell. He sat on the edge of his bed, back straight and hands folded in his lap. He stood when he saw them.

“Alana,” he breathed with a smile, then added, “Dr. Chilton, Dr. Du Maurier.”

Alana reached through the bars and Will lifted her hands to his lips and kissed them. He gazed back at her lovingly.

“You seem to be doing quite well, Mr. Graham,” Bedelia said.

“Oh yes, thank you,” Will replied, nodding at her. “My mind was in such a blur. I can barely recall any of it.”

“Your fever drove you to madness,” Dr. Chilton told him.

“I fear what would have happened to me, had it not been for your care,” Will said. “I am most grateful.”

“Do you still hear any voices in your head?” Chilton asked.

“No, Doctor,” Will answered. “My only thought is how much I would like to return home.”

“That is why I have brought Miss Bloom to see you,” Chilton said. “Dr. Du Maurier and I believe you can be released into her custody.”

“Thank you,” Will gasped. He released Alana’s hands and they opened the door for him. He walked out into her embrace and kissed her.

“Thank you so much, Doctors,” Alana said.

Bedelia entered the cell and began gathering up the rosaries that hung at his window, over his bed, and along the walls. She put them in a bag and handed them to Alana.

“See that these are hung all over his room. And Will, continue to wear yours around your neck, for the time being.”

“Is that really necessary?” Chilton asked as the couple left the sanitarium.

Bedelia turned to him and replied. “You are a clever man, Frederick. You reason well, and your wit is bold, but you are too prejudiced.”

“I, prejudiced?” Dr. Chilton scoffed. “No, my dear colleague, I simply do not trust in superstition. I understand that you are a metaphysician and you often muse over things that are supernatural, but surely you cannot believe that my patient was visited by a *Nosferatu*?”

Bedelia sighed and continued, “There are things old and new which must not be contemplated by men's eyes, because they know, or think they know, some things which other men have told them. It is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all, and if it explains not, then it says there is nothing to explain.”

“I will be sure to check in on him at home,” Dr. Chilton said. He walked away, his cane tapping gingerly. “When he has recovered his memories of his experience, I hope to fully comprehend what really happened to him.”

Will sighed when he lay down in his own bed once more. He let his back relax into the mattress, aching as his spine cracked pleasantly.

“Glad to be home?” Alana asked, sitting next to him in the bed.

“So glad,” he breathed, reaching out for her. She lowered her face to his hand and kissed it. Then she leaned over him and kissed him on the lips. Will held her face and enjoyed the pressure of her lips against his, the floral scent of her hair, the feel of her tongue in his mouth.

She sat back and began to undress him. She unlaced his shoes and removed them, then unbuckled his pants and slowly pulled them off. When she pulled off his shirt she eyed the rosary around his neck and rolled the beads between her fingers. She began to lift it over his head but he clutched her hand suddenly. He looked back at her with a fearful expression, but then smiled casually.

“Better leave it on,” he said, “Doctor’s orders.”

Alana smiled and kissed him, letting the rosary fall onto his chest once more. Will unbuttoned the front of her dress and pushed aside her undergarments until her breast was bare. He pressed his mouth against a nipple and flicked it with his tongue. She inhaled and stroked his hair.

Will wrapped his arms around her body and lifted her onto his lap, then laid her on her back. He pulled the sleeves of her dress down and stripped away the bodice, kissing her down her collar. He pushed one hand up her skirt and began to suck at her breast, nibbling slightly.

“I’ve missed you so much,” she whispered, watching his lovely face as he pulled at her nipple with his mouth. She felt his fingers enter her and she moaned, lying back on the pillow.

“I’ve missed you more,” he murmured with a cheeky grin. He probed his fingers inside of her, running his thumb over her clitoris. She clutched at his hair and he placed his mouth on her breast once more.

“It’s been so long,” she said. She closed her eyes. “I’ve been needing release.”

Will paused, a worried thought entering his head. Would he be able to find it himself? And how would he be able to play it off if he couldn’t?

“Don’t stop,” she urged. He continued to move his hand in and out of her, nudging her clitoris and hitting the spot that he knew would drive her crazy with his fingers. She moved her head back and forth on the pillow and massaged his neck and shoulders with her hands. It felt wonderful to him, and the worry left his mind once more. He basked in the sounds of her pleasure and the feel of her hands upon him.

When he felt her opening spasm around his fingers and saw her breasts swell and rise with her breath, he lifted his head to kiss her. She pushed him down and laid him back on the pillow. Lifting her skirt, she straddled him and lowered herself down on his cock.

Will moaned at the sensation of her wet opening sliding down on him.

“God, yes,” he shuddered. He watched her breasts bounce lightly as she rode him, throwing her head back toward the ceiling. She reached out to his chest and grabbed hold of the rosary. She twisted it in her hand, tightening it around his throat. His breath became ragged and he gripped her hips as she bucked on top of him.

Will felt the need rising in him and he lifted his hips along with her movements. Suddenly, he felt waves of tingling, throbbing, pumping sensations flood through him and he gasped as the hot liquid poured from him. After all this time, it felt like he was bleeding dry.

He cried out and his body went into spasms, pushing into her again and again as she clutched the rosary at his neck. When she fell down upon his chest and rained kisses on his collar and chest he felt truly spent.

“Thank you,” he whispered, still shivering. He wrapped his arms around her bare torso and held her with every ounce of strength he had left.

A tinkling sound and a strange thumping woke Alana hours later. She climbed out of bed and slipped a nightgown on. She heard a strangled cry and she ran into the next room. What she saw caused her to scream into her hand.

Her maid lie on the floor in a pool of blood, a tremendous gash ripped away from her throat. Hunched over her was a strange beast. No… it was a man; a man squatting down and supporting his upper body on his knuckles like an animal. He chewed and spat out the bloody gore that he’d torn from the woman. Then he turned on Alana.

Alana shrieked and grabbed a candlestick from the table. She flung her hand out with all of her strength and smacked her attacker across the skull with a sickening crack. The man barely seemed to register the pain it must have caused for he grabbed her and shoved her against the wall. He clutched her by the hair and slammed her head against the door jamb again and again until Alana slumped to the floor.

Her head seemed to fill with fluid. She tried to drag herself away as the man-creature loomed over her. Suddenly she heard a guttural growl from across the room. She looked up, her eyes blurring and focusing in and out.

Will stood naked in the doorway, head lowered and eyes glowering upward at the intruder. He was making a strange noise that she didn't recognize. His lips curled back in a snarl and bared his teeth.

The stranger stood up straight and stared back at him, a smile spreading across his bloody face.

"Hello Will," he said.

"Randall," Will sneered.

Randall lunged at him and Will lowered his head and leapt forward, butting him in the chest. The wind was audibly knocked out of the attacker and he moved back, grappling with Will's shoulders. Alana crept along the floor, reaching for the candlestick, but when she tried to rise, her head burned and it filled her with nausea. She slumped forward and tried to focus through the pain.

Will plowed against Randall until he slammed him against the wall. The man-beast bit him on the shoulder until blood seeped out around his mouth. Will screamed and pulled away, socking him hard on the jaw, once, twice. More blood emerged from Randall's mouth, but this time it was his own. He grinned at Will and kicked at him with his knee as he wrestled him to the ground with a loud thud. He slammed Will's head against the floor, pinning him down.

"The Master sends his regards," Randall growled, and opened his jaw to plunge it into Will's throat. Will smashed his fist against the boy's teeth and then grabbed him by the head, holding his worst weapon away from his exposed jugular.

Suddenly, Will released a ferocious cry and twisted Randall's head in his hands. His neck snapped, and Randall's eyes glazed over. Will pushed him off and stood up slowly, hovering triumphantly over his body.

Alana sat up and leaned against the wall, staring in disbelief. She heard another strange sound emerge from Will's throat: a low, eerie cackle.

"Will," she groaned.

Will shook his head and looked over at her, his expression changing.

"Alana!" he exclaimed, rushing to her. He cradled her head in his hands. "Are you all right?"

"I'll be fine," she said as he helped her to her feet. "Are you all right?"

"Yes," he replied, holding her head to his chest. He petted her hair and looked out the open window at the moon. His breath began to quicken and he leaned away toward the window.

“I killed your pet!” he screamed. “What do you think of me, now?!”

Chapter 9

The Hampstead Horror

As was previously reported, several children in and around Hampstead Heath had appeared missing for brief periods of time followed by their subsequent return with strange bite wounds on their neck and giving accounts of a mysterious "ruby lady." In the past couple of days, the families that reported their children have been slaughtered, with similar wounds on their necks. One man, Garrett Jacob Hobbs, survived the attack, claiming that his wife was killed by a "demon." The children of these families have again disappeared without a trace. Police are searching for them, and anyone with information about this "ruby lady" is urged to come forward at once.

Bedelia threw the paper down on Chilton's desk and pointed at it. He glanced at her momentarily before reading the story.

"My God," he said. "I don't even know what to say to this."

"Do you mean to tell me, Frederick, that you have no suspicion as to what these poor people died of, not after all the hints given?"

"I imagine you'll tell me that there are vampires in London," Chilton remarked.

"That is exactly what I'm suggesting," Bedelia replied.

"Madam, I respect your intelligence and insight above all others," he said, "But this is a leap that I cannot make."

Bedelia sighed in exasperation and stared out the window.

"Speaking of strange attacks," Chilton continued. "I just received a telegram from Alana Bloom."

Bedelia looked back at him.

"A ferocious man broke into their home, killed their maid, and nearly killed Miss Bloom. Will was able to put an end to him."

"I must visit them at once," Bedelia said. She snatched up the paper and left Chilton to his thoughts.

Alana Bloom poured Bedelia a cup of tea. Will stood on the other side of the room, leaning against the wall with his arms crossed. He stared at the middle distance distractedly.

"Merely an intruder," he suddenly said, nodding.

“He called you by name,” Alana reminded him. “You called him Randall.”

Bedelia stared at Will over her cup. The young man twitched and smiled uneasily.

“Did I?”

“Will,” Bedelia said, putting her cup down and crossing her legs. “I am not Dr. Chilton. I will not rush you away to the sanitarium for speaking truths.”

Will looked at her, eyes widening for a moment. He cleared his throat and glanced at Alana.

“Tell her, Will,” Alana urged.

“Randall is, or was, Count Hannibal Lecter’s familiar.”

“Count Lecter is a vampire,” Bedelia stated.

Will’s head jolted in surprise.

“Yes, I know, I’m on your side,” she added. Will approached her, arms still crossed in front of him.

“Then you know there is no stopping him,” he said.

“Oh there are ways,” Bedelia replied. “A wooden stake to the heart, thorough immolation, or removing the head.”

“And how are we to accomplish this?” Alana asked.

Bedelia raised her eyebrows at her.

“We?”

Alana looked perturbed and shifted in her seat.

“Yes, we. Am I to stand by while some monster plagues my fiancé?”

Bedelia smiled and said, “I like you.”

She pulled the paper out and handed it to her.

“Your fiancé isn’t the only victim of this plague.”

Will walked behind Alana and looked down at the paper while she read about the murders in Hampstead. He gritted his teeth, but unfolded his arms and instead clenched his fists at his sides.

“Children,” he muttered.

“We must find this ‘ruby lady’,” Bedelia said. “Killing a sire relinquishes the vampiric curse upon those afflicted. We can save these children.”

“Her name is Freddie,” Will responded, walking away. His head was lowered.

“You know her?” Alana asked. She saw Will’s body language and felt intense pity for whatever he had experienced, which he still had yet to confess to her.

Will wiped his face with his hands and shuddered.

“She is one of Count Lecter’s ‘sisters’, along with another named Margot. They are… vicious.”

“Will,” Alana whispered. Her eyes filled with pain for him.

“It is my understanding that Hannibal Lecter resides at Castle Carfax,” Bedelia said.

“He is not there now,” Will corrected.

“How do you know?”

“Because,” he sighed, exhaustion creeping over his face, “I can still sense him. In my head.”

Bedelia stood up.

“It’s weak,” Will added. “He no longer has the hold on me he once did. But there is a psychic link between us. He has traveled elsewhere for the time being.”

“Are Margot and Freddie at Castle Carfax?”

“Yes, I believe they are,” he answered.

“Will,” Bedelia asked, approaching him. He shrunk back from her and crossed his arms again. “Is Count Lecter still communicating to you?”

“Yes,” he replied in a soft voice. He looked over at Alana as if to ground himself.

“What is he saying?”

Will shuddered and held himself.

“He’s… pleased with me,” he explained, “For killing Randall. He is proud of me. He says that… he loves me. He wants me to be with him.”

“I don’t think you should come with us to Castle Carfax,” Bedelia said. “If he still has a hold on you, it could be quite dangerous for you to be near his lair.”

Will bit his lip and nodded his head.

“Well I insist upon going,” Alana remarked, sipping her tea.

Bedelia turned to her with a delighted smirk.

“Have you ever shot a crossbow?” she asked.

Alana met Bedelia at the back entrance to the castle in broad daylight. The doctor brought with her a thin, pale man with large eyes who carried a crossbow.

“This is Mr. Garrett Jacob Hobbs,” she explained. “His daughter is most likely inside.”

Alana greeted him and Bedelia handed her a crossbow loaded with a wooden stake. She also slung a satchel filled with more stakes around her neck, as well as a rosary.

“Be prepared,” she warned them both. “The children inside may look innocent, but they are quite deadly. Do not kill them. Hold up your rosaries if they draw near. We must kill the sires in order to cure them.”

“Yes, please,” Hobbs agreed. “No one shoot my daughter.”

Alana nodded at him.

Bedelia walked up to the ground-to-ceiling windows at the back and began busting through the glass with the butt of her crossbow. She climbed inside and Alana and Hobbs followed after her.

It was very dark in the castle and smelled of musty earth. Bedelia lit a lantern and lifted it above her head before venturing onward.

“They will be sleeping during the day,” she whispered. “We must find their beds and shoot them before they gather their wits.”

They entered a vast room filled with couches. Several children lounged about, sleeping heavily. Alana clasped her rosary.

“Look in the rooms,” Bedelia whispered. “If you see the sisters, do not act before alerting the rest of us.”

Alana and Bedelia made their way up a grand staircase and Hobbs wandered down a hallway until he found an open door. He looked inside and froze when he saw what was inside. Abigail lay on the bed, her hands folded across her chest. She appeared dead. A sob caught in his throat and he walked toward her.

Suddenly, the girl’s eyes snapped open, and she sat up.

“Oh God, Abigail,” he sighed.

“Papa?” the girl asked in a groggy daze. She rubbed her eyes.

“I’m going to save you, Abigail,” he promised. “You’re going to be all right.”

“Papa, I’m scared,” she cried. “I want to go home.”

“You are going home, baby,” he said.

“Please, hold me, Papa,” she said, reaching out to him. “I’m so scared and cold.”

Hobb’s arms ached with longing to hold her. He leaned toward her and she scooted away.

“No, Papa,” she cried. “That thing on your neck. It burns me.”

Hobbs held his rosary and stared at it.

“Please, I just want you to give me a hug and let me know I’m safe.”

Hobbs couldn’t bear it. He desperately wanted to cradle his little girl. He pulled the rosary off and threw it aside, then bent down and picked her up.

“Thank you, Papa,” she said, holding him tight. Then she reared back her head and bit into his throat with a terrible hiss.

Alana and Bedelia peered into several rooms, finding the occasional child, but no sisters. They finally came to a grand room where the two lay embraced together in bed. Their hands were clasped together, their faces turned toward each other in a sleeping kiss.

Bedelia raised her crossbow and ventured forward.

“We must be sure to hit their hearts,” she whispered.

Alana readied her own crossbow and crept toward the other side of the bed. Suddenly a scream rang out. It was Hobbs.

Freddie and Margot’s eyes opened and they sat up in bed.

“Now!” Bedelia called and shot a stake at Margot. It plunged into her heart and the vampire shrieked horribly, kicking as black blood poured out from her. She fell dead seconds later.

Alana aimed to shoot but Freddie darted out of the way at unnatural speed and she feared she would miss and leave them both to load. Bedelia desperately pushed the next stake into her weapon as Freddie shot across the room and smacked Alana’s crossbow to the side. Alana swung it back again, upside Freddie’s head.

Freddie latched her hand around Alana’s throat and glowered at her.

“I may have let a pretty thing like you join our family,” she hissed. “But for what you did to my sister, I will rip you both to shreds while you still breathe.”

Children began to creep into the room, snarling and gathering around them with tiny fangs ready to bite. Bedelia lifted her rosary and tried to hold them off as they circled her. One would advance, and she pressed the rosary against them only for another to come behind her. She spun around, again and again.

Alana's face turned red as Freddie lifted her from the ground by her throat. She brought up her crossbow and stuck it under the vampire's ribcage. The angle strained her hand but she managed to squeeze the trigger. The stake jutted up inside Freddie's sternum and the ruby lady screamed and fell to the ground with Alana on top of her. She pulled the stake out from the woman and held it over her heart with two hands.

"This is for Will!" she yelled, and plunged it into her breast.

Freddie's eyes grew wide and her mouth fell open as black blood pooled out around the stake.

"Will…" Freddie repeated, and she began to cackle a bit as the blood seeped from her red lips. Then she lay still.

The children backed away from them, the humanity returning to their eyes. Some began to cry.

"Where's Hobbs?" Bedelia called.

They both hurried downstairs and found the room he'd gone into. Abigail crouched beside her father, shaking him.

"Papa?" she pleaded. "Papa, wake up."

Alana rushed forward and picked the girl up. Bedelia knelt down beside Hobbs and felt for a pulse.

"He's gone," she muttered.

"No!" Abigail cried, her face filled with horror. She fought against Alana, trying to return to his side. "Papa, I'm sorry… please wake up!"

Alana clutched the girl to her chest, soothing her. She and Bedelia gathered the children together and they all stepped out into the sunlight.

Abigail sobbed and pressed her face against Alana's shoulder.

"Papa… I'm so sorry…"

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"The deed is done," Bedelia said when Will opened the door. He stood aside and let her enter. Alana followed after her with Abigail still clutched to her chest.

"I know," Will said. "I could feel it. I could feel Count Lecter realizing that they were dead."

A look of profound sadness came over him.

"He is in such pain."

"Good," Alana huffed, and sat with the little girl on her lap.

"Who is this?" Will asked, kneeling beside her. He brushed the girl's hair out of her eyes. It clung to the tears that stained her face.

"This is Abigail," Alana explained. "Her parents were killed, and she's going to be staying with us."

Will looked at the bite mark on her neck.

"Come here Abigail," he said holding his arms out to her. "Would you like some juice?"

Abigail nodded and slowly climbed down from Alana's lap. Will took her hand and led her into the kitchen where he found an orange and squeezed it into a glass for her.

"I am sorry about what happened to your parents," he said. He watched her drink it, and noticed that there was blood around her lips. He took out a handkerchief, dipped it in water, and wiped her mouth clean.

"I killed them," Abigail mourned, "Both my mother and father."

"No," Will whispered, putting his arm around her. "That wasn't you. It was the thing that bit you. That was controlling you."

He pointed at the bite marks on his own neck.

"See, one of them controlled me too. He made me do things I didn't want to do."

Alana walked into the kitchen and smiled when she saw Abigail hug Will.

"You're safe now," he murmured into her hair.

"Did you kill the thing that bit you?" Abigail asked.

“Not yet,” he replied, looking up at Alana, “But I will.”

Will returned to Bedelia in the sitting room while Alana stayed with Abigail.

“I’m going to help you catch him,” he said.

“I’m not sure that’s wise,” Bedelia answered. “I saw the way you looked when you spoke of Count Lecter’s pain. It affected you, didn’t it?”

“Yes, I empathize with him,” Will admitted, “But I can control it.”

“Can you?” she asked. “I can’t risk that you succumb to him when in his presence.”

“I’m the only one who can sense where he is,” Will argued. “You need me.”

Bedelia nodded.

“Your psychic link with him could prove invaluable. We don’t have any idea where he is.”

“I know where he is,” Will said. “I can see water lapping at the sides of a boat. He’s on his way back to Castle Lecter. We have to catch up to him before he reaches his old lair and gains strength.”

“What is he saying to you right now?”

Will strained his neck and looked away from her.

“He’s telling me that he forgives me. That he wants to…” he trailed off.

“Wants to what?”

“Pardon me if I don’t divulge all of the sordid details.”

Bedelia came closer to him, her eyes searching for contact with his.

“Is it enticing, Will?” she asked.

Will shuddered. He brought his hand to his mouth and closed his eyes.

“Very,” he whispered.

“How can you say that he doesn’t have power over you?”

“I am not in his thrall anymore,” Will said, keeping his voice lowered. “He doesn’t control me. But he reached a part of me that… wanted what he offered. Even now, it’s making me question myself.”

“You can see why you could be a liability.”

Will gestured wildly at her.

“You don’t understand. The fact that he reached me, not only on a surface level like a puppet on a string, but to who I am as a man, is the reason I must be rid of him once and for all. Even when I am not under his gaze, I long to be…”

He blushed when he realized the truth of his statement. Count Lecter had been cruel to him in many ways. He had objectified and used him for his pleasure, and he liked it. It made him feel desired, and he too was overcome with desire. It was more than he had ever fantasized about even in his most secret thoughts.

“I have to kill him,” Will insisted, his voice dark and rough, “For myself… and for Abigail, and everyone like us. And you have to let me come with you, because you have no choice otherwise. It’s my involvement, or losing him forever.”

Bedelia knew he was right. How else could they track him down before he reached his destination? He could be taking any road through the heavily-forested mountains, and once a vampire lord reaches his ancient lair, he is nearly invincible.

“Please… let me kill him,” he whispered.

“When we find Count Lecter,” she said. “I’ll let you pull the trigger.”

On board the ship that took Bedelia, Alana, and Will east, the young man clutched his rosary in his sleep. In his dreams, he saw Count Lecter coming toward him in the garden. A collar and leash dangled from his outstretched hand. Will fell to his knees, took the collar, and attached it around his own neck. He nuzzled against his master’s leg and begged him to carry him back to his lair, to make him his pet, to use every part of his body for whatever pleasure he could conceive of.

Will awoke with a throbbing erection. He groaned and pushed his hand down his drawers and began to stroke himself. The worst of this, to him, was that Count Lecter was not controlling his body anymore. He knew it. And yet, it still responded to him like a slave. What was it that Lecter saw in him, when he first arrived at his door, that made him think *this is the one… this man will be mine*? He knew things about him that he didn’t even know himself.

“Your propensity for obedience and a thinly repressed desire for subjugation, your tendency to become aroused when humiliated or frightened.” he had said. When Will first heard those words he couldn’t deny how they made him feel, spoken out loud; the tingling sensation all over his body, the red hot warmth that spread through him, the stiffening of his cock. He had tried to argue, even though there was a glimmer of curiosity there. How could he argue now, that he was dreaming of it on his own?

Will fondled himself until he felt the pressure building up behind his cock, knew he was about to come. Then he stopped. He remembered how it felt to be persistently aroused, and unable to find any release. It was deliriously painful and pleasurable. He rolled over on his bed and gently rubbed against the mattress, thoughts of being in thrall again nearly bringing

him over the edge. Again he stopped. Count Lecter would not have allowed him to come, and now he found himself not wanting to indulge himself either.

It was the worst kind of control; the kind that persuaded him to obey even when he didn't have to. When he awoke again in the morning, he hated himself for his dreams and his thoughts. And he hated Count Lecter for putting them in his head in the first place. When the three of them disembarked from the ship, and set out on horseback, he was more set than ever to put a stake in the vampire's heart once and for all.

"He's in a carriage, asleep inside of a box," Will called as they rode onward. "He's taking the Western pass, a small one, not often travelled. This path will head them off."

Alana and Bedelia followed his lead as they soldiered onward, up a winding path through the trees. The horses' hooves tore at the loose road, kicking up soil and rocks as they pushed faster and faster.

"Here!" Will called, and they came to a stop at the turn of the road. They could hear the carriage approaching.

The formed a barricade with their horses and the carriage driver shouted as he pulled the horses to a stop.

Bedelia marched forward. The driver stared at her crossbow in astonishment.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Professor Du Maurier, and these are my colleagues," she said. "I must inspect your cargo."

"You have no right," the driver began, but then quieted when she held the butt of the crossbow in her hand and the other two strode forward with their weapons. The man climbed down and stepped away from the carriage.

"There's something not right about that box," he warned them. "I wouldn't open it if I were you."

Alana brought forth a crowbar and they began to pry the box open. The man became terribly frightened and turned to run off, crossing himself repeatedly.

When they pulled off the lid of the box, Count Lecter lay inside with his eyes shut and a serene expression on his face. Bedelia stood out of Will's way.

"Directly into the heart," she said. "It will be quick."

Will readied his crossbow. He stared at the man's face, beautiful and stoic as it was. He saw his hands clasped over his chest. He remembered how they had felt upon his body, firm and self-assured. He began to shake, and tried to aim.

Lecter's eyes opened.

You've returned to me, my pet.

"No…" Will whispered. The rosary felt heavy around his neck.

How badly I've wanted to touch you once more. I will make you mine forever. I will grant you immortality so that we may be together, forever young, forever entwined in bliss.

Will closed his eyes. The allure of it was undeniable. Even now, in full control of his faculties, he longed to be made to crawl, to flog himself before his master until he saw him smile back at him.

"Now, Will, Now!" Bedelia shouted. Will opened his eyes again, but he began to lower the crossbow. Bedelia pulled him out of the way and Alana set aim.

"No!" Will shouted. He tried to push past Bedelia and stop Alana, but he saw her finger squeezing the trigger, just as Lecter began to sit up.

"No!" he screamed again, and pointed his crossbow at her. He shot her in the arm. The stake buried deep into her flesh. She doubled over in pain.

"Will!" she shrieked.

Will pulled a crossbow from his satchel and loaded it into the crossbow. Bedelia struck him with the butt of hers and he snarled at her, leaping onto her and pushing her onto the ground.

"Will, it's not you!" Bedelia cried.

"It is me," Will groaned, wrapping his hands around her throat and strangling her. "It is truly me. He knows me and he loves me!"

"Stop!" she choked, her face turning red.

Count Lecter rose from his box and came out of the carriage. Alana desperately tried to lift her crossbow with her left arm, but it wobbled in her hand. Lecter reached out to her and pushed forth a pulse wave that knocked her on her back.

Bedelia grappled around with her hand as her eyes began to blur and roll back into her head. She finally grabbed a stake from her satchel and stabbed it into the side of Will's neck. He howled in pain and fell back.

Lecter saw his pet fall and glared at Bedelia with red eyes. He rushed toward her in one movement and lifted her body above the ground. His hand began to burn as her rosary fell against it, but his rage made him seemingly impervious to it.

Alana propped her crossbow up on her knee and held it in place while she squeezed the trigger. It shot through Lecter's back and into his heart. He released a terrifying growl and dropped Bedelia. Then he fell himself, black blood gushing out over his fine waistcoat.

"No…" Will cried, and crawled toward him. His skin was pale and colorless from blood loss. He tore the rosary off, threw it to the side, and laid his head on the Count's chest.

Lecter reached out for him, and placed his hand on his neck.

“My pet,” he whispered, and kissed the top of his head.

Alana and Bedelia stood over them.

“Will…” Alana sobbed.

But Will was gone. He was wrapped in the vampire’s embrace. Life seemed to rush out of Count Lecter and he now looked as quiet and gentle as any man in death; his nose buried in the curls of his love.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! Stay tuned for the next story in the Hannibal Gothic Tales series: The Strange Case of Dr. Lecter and Mr. Graham!

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